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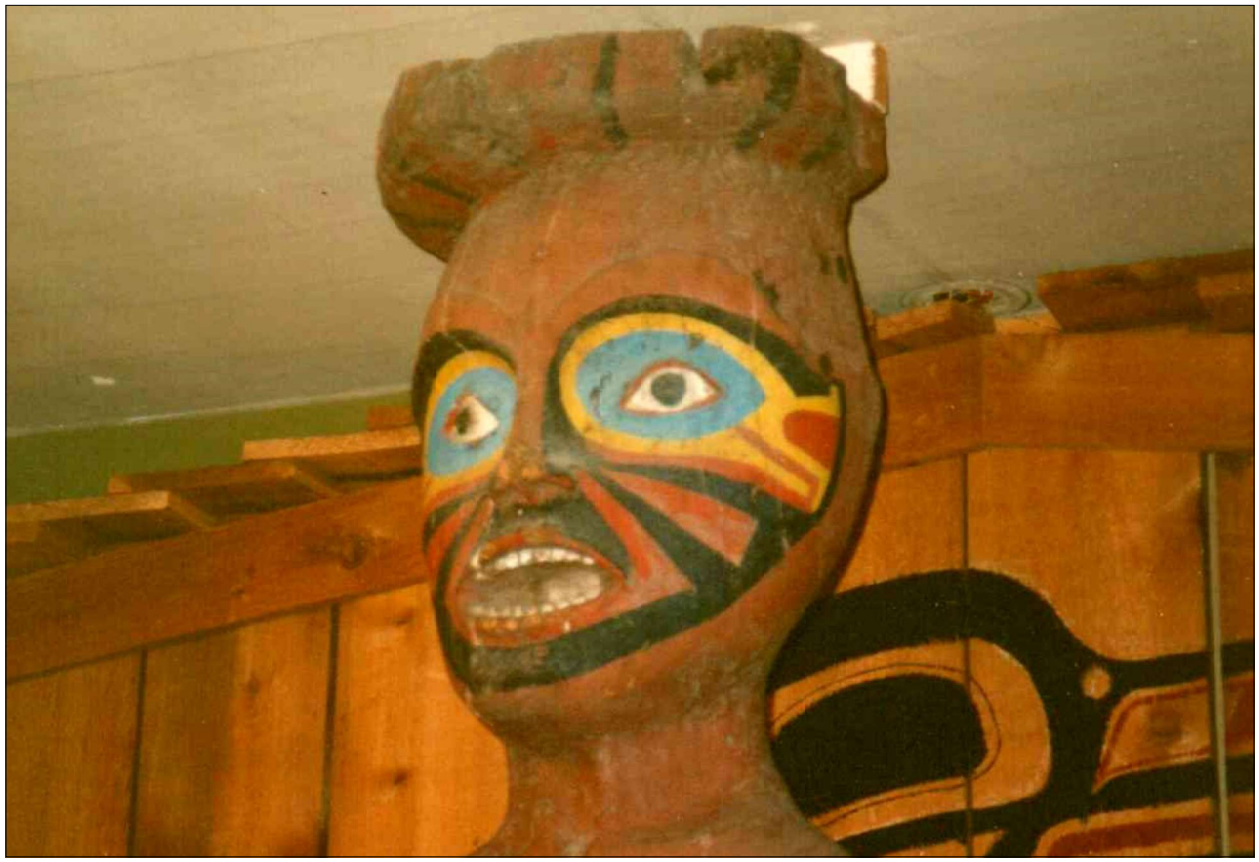
THURSTON COUNTY HISTORICAL JOURNAL



Shifting Patterns of Prejudice:
The Story of a Native American House Post

The Tumwater Hospital That Never Was

Thurston County Pioneer, Teacher and Community Activist:
The Life of Ada Sprague Mowell

The Port Townsend Southern Railroad

Early Washington Records from Oregon

$5.00

THURSTON COUNTY HISTORICAL JOURNAL

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Submission Guidelines

The Journal *welcomes factual articles dealing with any aspect of Thurston County history. Please contact the editor before submitting an article to determine its suitability for publication. Articles on previously unexplored topics, new interpretations of well-known topics, and personal recollections are preferred. Articles may range in length from 100 words to 10,000 words, and should include source notes and suggested illustrations.*

Submitted articles will be reviewed by the editorial committee and, if chosen for publication, will be fact-checked and may be edited for length and content. The Journal *regrets that authors cannot be monetarily compensated, but they will gain the gratitude of readers and the historical community for their contributions to and appreciation of local history.*

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On the cover: *From 1972 to 1992, a Native American house post boldly stood in front of a Nuu-chah-nulth (or Nootka) house screen on the second floor of the Washington State Capital Museum as part of a long-term display. Photo courtesy of Drew Crooks. See article on page 2.*

THE PORT TOWNSEND SOUTHERN RAILROAD

James S. Hannum, M.D.

Many residents of Thurston County are aware that a narrow gauge railway (the Olympia & Chehalis Valley Railroad) ran between Olympia and Tenino in the 1880s. That line was widened to standard gauge in 1891, when it was merged into the Port Townsend Southern Railroad.[1] Less well-known are the schemes developed by the Oregon Improvement Company (a holding company which controlled the Port Townsend Southern) to build a rail link between Port Townsend and Olympia. Those endeavors are the subject of this article.

The Olympia & Tenino Railroad began operating in 1878. It underwent reorganization in August 1881, with a change in name to the Olympia & Chehalis Valley Railroad. In 1884 and again in 1886, it was rumored

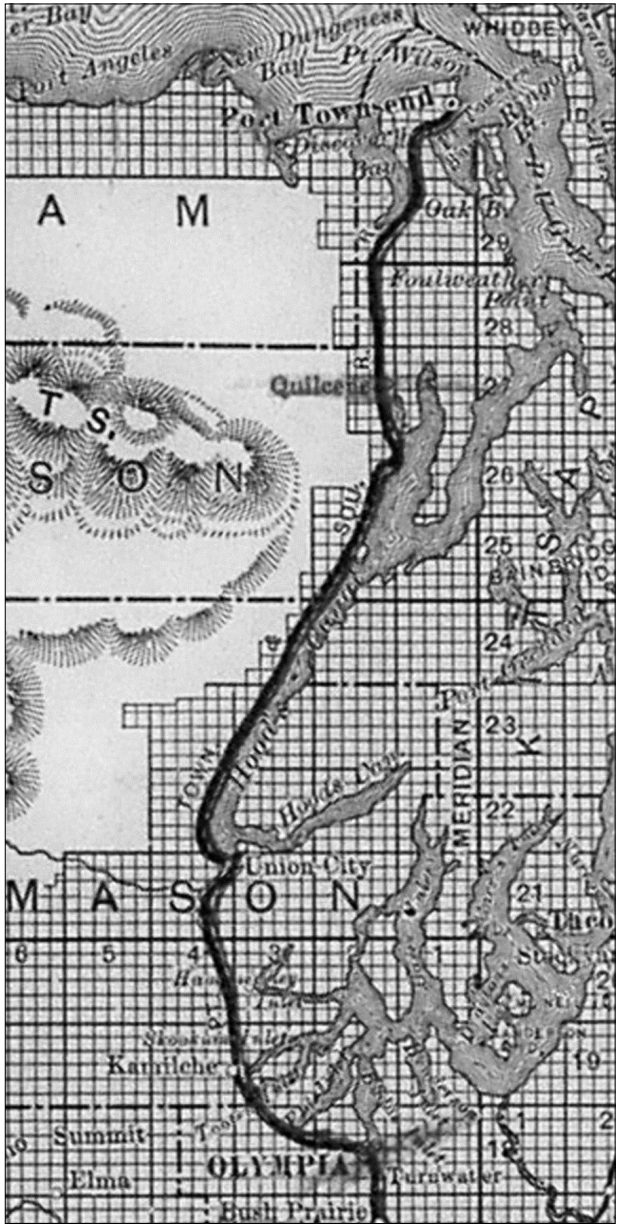


Figure 1: Map of Western Washington Showing the Railroads of the Oregon Improvement Company. *Copyrighted, 1890, by E. H. Morrison, General Land Agent Oregon Improvement Company. University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections Division, Allen South, Accession No. 0249-001, Oregon Improvement Company Records, Box 81.*

that the line would be lengthened into the coal fields south and east of Tenino. However, such expansion did not take place.

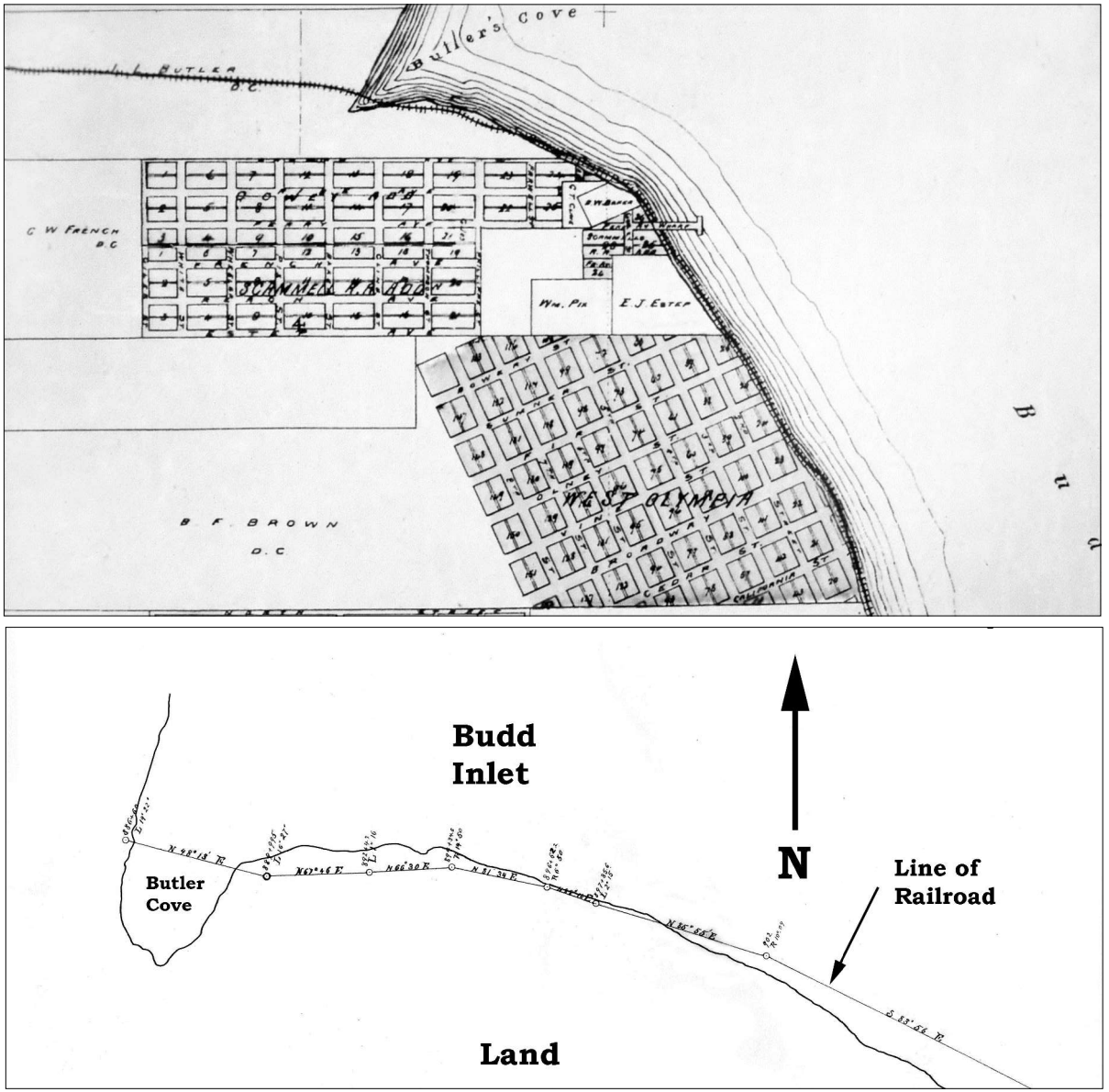
The Port Townsend Southern Railroad was incorporated in 1887 by fanciful Port Townsend business people who wanted to make Port Townsend the terminal for a transcontinental railroad. But financing a huge, ongoing project like that was more than the Port Townsend community could sustain. By 1889, the railroad still had not laid any track, and the enterprise was sold to the Oregon Improvement Company. Late that year, the Olympia & Chehalis Valley Railroad also came under control of that same Oregon holding company.

Detailed location survey maps for much of the Port Townsend Southern Railroad have not been located. However, a Mason County deed suggests that mid-1889, the right-of-way was intended to pass through Union City (now called Union) on Hood Canal, in Mason County.[2] Figure 1, from a map produced in 1890, provides a general idea of the right-of-way proposed between Port Townsend and Olympia. The pathway shown appears to be a schematic generalization; clearly, it is grossly inaccurate (as will be demonstrated later) between Union City and Olympia. The pre-existing Olympia & Chehalis Valley Railroad, leading from Olympia to the south, is also visible in this figure.

The valuation record of the Port Townsend Southern Railroad Company indicates that on July 1, 1889, a contract was made with Elijah Smith of New York City (the President of the Oregon Improvement Company) to build the line between Port Townsend and Olympia. During 1890 and 1891, 27.304 miles of railway were constructed from Port Townsend south to Quilcene.[3] However, that right-of-way was never extended farther than Quilcene.

Also in 1890, work began in Olympia on a right-of-way toward the north, along the west side of Budd Inlet. The June 20, 1890 *Washington Standard* reported: "The San Francisco Bridge Company has received the contract for building the Port Townsend Southern track from the present terminus of the narrow-gauge to Butler's Cove. A large portion of the road-bed will be on piles. Work will begin in a few days." The *Washington Standard* mentioned on July 18, 1890: "Piles for the Port Townsend Southern Railroad track are being driven along the water front of Westside. They will be used for a mile or more when the route passes to the land and will be built on the beach with cribbing and fill. The road bed will be fifteen feet wide."

Later that year, a delay was anticipated in completing the track between Quilcene and Olympia. The October 10, 1890 *Railroad Gazette* reported: "Port Townsend Southern – About four miles have been graded north from Olympia in the direction of Union City, Wash., at the end of Hood's Canal. The company will connect by boat with Quilcene. . . . Between Union



***Top**: Figure 2:* Whitham & Page's Map of Olympia and Surroundings. Thurston Co., Washington, 1890. *By Scammell & Conger. Digital version courtesy of Washington State Library.*

***Bottom**: Figure 3.* Map of Portownsend [sic] and Southern Railroad Company. *Thurston County Auditor's Plat # 2700225. Recorded April 22, 1890 on pages 52-55 of Thurston County Plat Book #5, by Truman W. Brown, Engineer and Agent.*

City and Tenino a few right of way cases have not yet been adjusted."

Figure 2 is part of an 1890 map which reveals the company's initial conception of where the railroad would be located, north of Olympia. As mentioned above, it was to run on pilings, or use cribbing along the shoreline, most of the way to Butler Cove. Figure 3 is part of the survey (near Butler Cove) for this right-of-way, which was submitted April 22, 1890. Readers who are familiar with the topography around Butler Cove will understand why this route was subsequently rejected. The grade is too steep; over a relatively short distance, it rises from water level to a much higher elevation on the west side of Butler Cove (where the Olympia Country Club is situated currently). As early as August 16, 1890, the Port Townsend Southern Railroad began securing an upland right-of-way for its extension north of Olympia.[4]

This raises a question about why the railroad wanted to go to Butler Cove in the first place. The answer is, to export coal. Although a long wharf had been constructed in downtown Olympia in 1888, dredging of the harbor had not been completed. Docking ocean-going ships downtown remained a challenge. In the early 1870s, when the Northern Pacific Railroad flirted with the idea of making Olympia its Puget Sound terminal, one group of local business people suggested creating an extensive docking facility at Butler Cove. Coal from

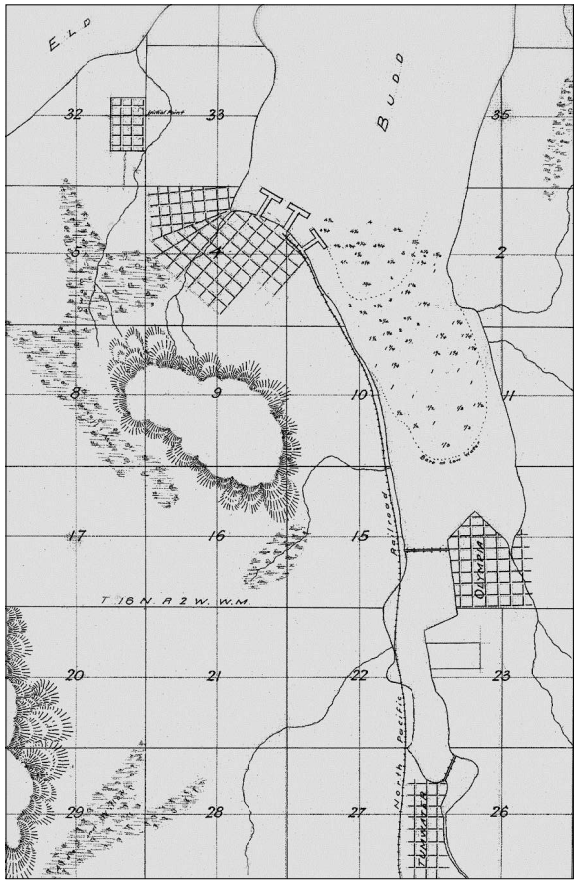


Figure 4: Part of Plat of Clark's Addition to Olympia, *recorded 1871. Courtesy of Washington State Archives, Southwest Washington Regional Archives.*

the south part of Thurston County was to have been one of the commodities handled there. Figure 4 is the plat of their unfulfilled proposal.

Renewed interest in exporting coal was demonstrated in 1889 when the Olympia & Chehalis Valley Railroad purchased a right-of-way immediately northeast of Centralia, in Lewis Coun-

ty.[5] An extension of the railroad over that property was never constructed. However, later, the Eastern Railway & Lumber Company did build its own line in that general area.

The situation regarding exportation of coal was clarified in 1890 by an article in the April 25 issue of *Railroad Gazette*:[6] "Olympia & Chehalis Valley. - It is stated that the Oregon Improvement Co. has purchased this road, and will extend it south six miles to Cherry Hill, Wash., and to other points, and also change the gauge to standard. The road extends from Olympia to Tenino, 15 1/2 miles, and is of 3-ft. gauge." The significance of "Cherry Hill" will be clarified later in this article.

The October 31, 1890 *Railroad Gazette* reported a situation that presaged serious problems in construction at the Olympia end of the line toward Union City: "Port Townsend & Southern – This line has been completed (except for track-laying) as far as Mud Bay, and the work at Olympia, Wash., will be discontinued." The laborers who had been toiling there were sent by boat to Quilcene, to continue the task of clearing and grading.

In the spring of 1891, when construction at the Olympia end of the line to Union City should have resumed, the railroad's parent company (the Oregon Improvement Company) was experiencing a cash flow problem. Coal miners at its Franklin mine (located in eastern King County) had gone on strike the previous fall, and were being joined by miners at Newcastle and Black Diamond. A vicious labor dispute resulted, and for many months, the Oregon Improvement Company was unable to fulfill contracts for coal from its own mines. It had to purchase almost $500,000 worth of coal in San Francisco and British Columbia to meet those commitments. In addition, costs relating to the strike itself amounted to $75-80,000, money which had been earmarked for construction.

The company's monetary crisis may have contributed to the fact that, early in 1891, the San Francisco Bridge Company was no longer working on the extension north of Olympia. On March 1, 1891, J. H. Smith & Company received a contract to complete the three-mile extension to Butler Cove.[7] Work resumed. The April 24, 1891 *Washington Standard* declared: "Bids for grading the Port Townsend Southern between Olympia and Union City will be opened May 10th." Shortly thereafter, a major change took place in the projected grade alignment between Quilcene and Olympia. No longer would the track pass through Union City. William Harlan Kennedy, a highly respected railroad engineer who specialized in locating new grades, had been hired to oversee adjustments to the right-of-way. He worked with Colonel Simon W. Scott, who later became the General Land and Tax Agent for the Oregon Improvement Company.

An article in the May 15, 1891 *Mason County Journal* pertained to right-of-

way relocation and apparently was taken from two separate sources. The first came from a news report out of Tacoma; the second seems to have originated at *The Olympian*: "The Port Townsend Southern – Tacoma – May 9. – There is a well-defined rumor here that the Port Townsend Southern has been purchased by the Union Pacific. Engineer Kennedy, who was assistant chief engineer of the Union Pacific, under Engineer Bogue, is now in Olympia looking over the work of the road with Colonel Scott, the right of way agent of the road. Mr. Kennedy has been employed by the latter company (the Port Townsend Southern Railroad) to relocate its line from Olympia to Union City, and will begin operation on Monday.

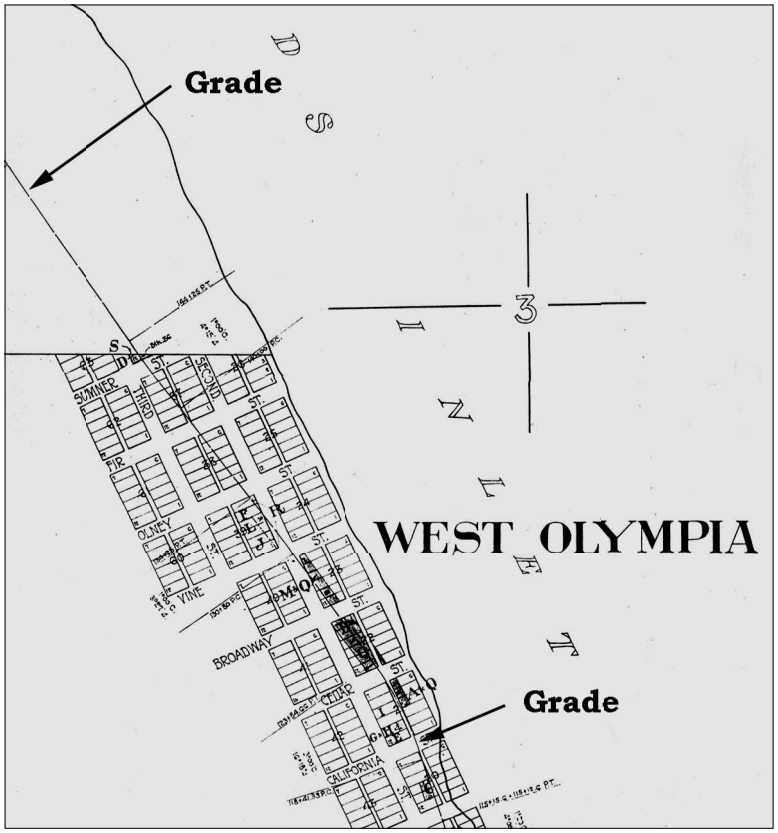


Figure 5: Northern Pacific Railroad Right-of-Way Plat Map*, Thurston County Assessor's Office. The subdivision of West Olympia was recorded October 16, 1869. Thurston County Auditor's Plat # 2700005.*

"Engineer Kennedy, late assistant chief engineer of the Union Pacific line, is in the city with Colonel Scott, the right of way agent of the Port Townsend Southern [unknown why this redundancy was included]. Mr. Kennedy has been employed by the latter company to relocate its line from Olympia to Union City, and will begin operation this morning. Whether or not the employment of Mr. Kennedy on this work has any significance in connection with the rumor of the purchase of the Port Townsend Southern people, *The Olympian* is not advised." But the Union Pacific Railroad did not buy the Port Townsend Southern, for it was struggling to construct its own line through Olympia, the Portland & Puget Sound Railroad.

Figure 5 shows the path chosen for the extension north of Olympia, as it

passed through West Olympia. Figure 6 is part of a map made in 1891. Likely, it is a good representation of the intended route of the Port Townsend Southern Railroad between Quilcene and Olympia, after the right-of-way was adjusted by Engineer Kennedy. Note that Union City was to be bypassed. By September of that year, all the finished right-of-way (Port Townsend to Quilcene and Tenino to Butler Cove) was ready for operation as a standard-gauge railroad. Records preserved at the University of Washington Libraries, in Seattle, indicate that during that month, the railroad's Chief Engineer accepted into service the Port Townsend Division, from Port Townsend to Quilcene, 27.6 miles, and the Olympia Division, from Tenino to Butler Cove, 18.0 miles.[8] In the same box of records, another (undated) document gave the operational distance between Tenino and Butler Cove as 17.6 miles.

What was the actual configuration of the right-of-way built between Olympia and Butler Cove? Figure 7, prepared in February 1891, confirms that a pathway primarily on shore had already been substituted for the pathway visualized in Figure 2. Evidently, the route immediately north of Brown's Wharf was not yet settled, even though some grading in that region may have been done the previous year (as reported above in the October 31, 1890 *Railway Gazette*). Brown's Wharf had been Olympia's only deep-water moorage

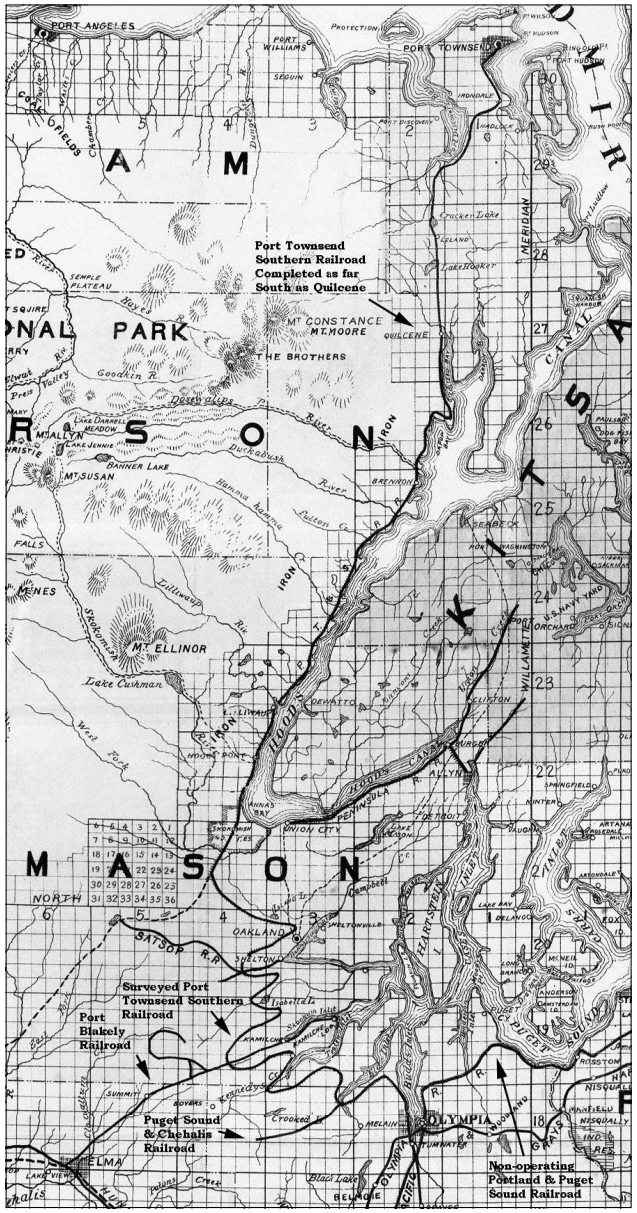
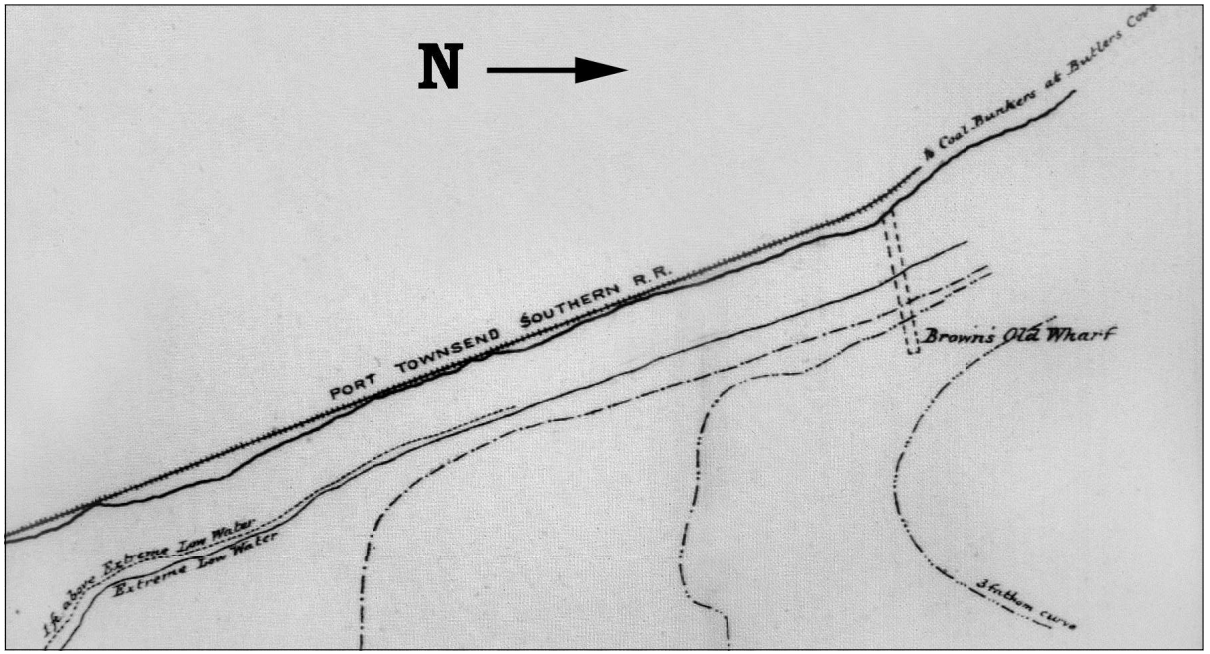
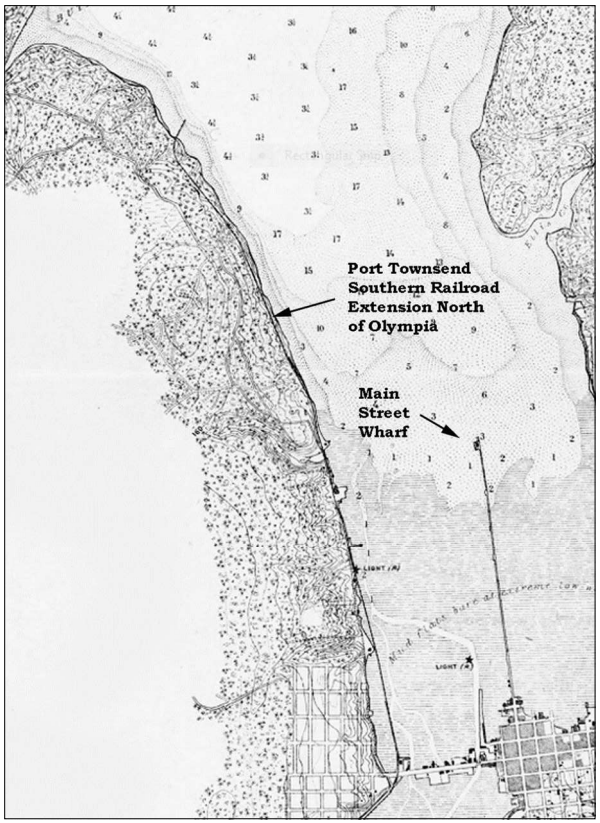


Figure 6: Lowman & Hanford's Sectional Map of Puget Sound and Grays Harbor Country. Compiled from the Latest Official Data and Other Sources. *By C. H. Amerine. Published by the Lowman & Hanford Stationery & Printing Co., Seattle, Wash. 1891. Courtesy of David Rumsey Map Collection.*



Top: *Figure 7:* Olympia Harbor Washington: Map Showing Improvements. Compiled from maps on file in U.S. Engineer Office, Portland, Oregon, and from Survey and Examination made in February 1891 by B. W. De Courcy, Assistant Engineer. *Courtesy of Washington State University Digital Collection.*



Right: *Figure 8:* Olympia Harbor-Puget Sound Washington, First Published in 1876-Published June 1892, T. C. Mendenhall, Superintendent. *This chart was produced by the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey and was updated periodically. Digitized by the Washington State Library.*

until approximately 1888, when downtown Olympia's Main Street Wharf was opened. Positioned on the shore of Budd Inlet at the place where the cur-

rent Old Port community is located, commercial activity at Brown's Wharf must have been significantly reduced after 1888.

Figure 8 was published in June 1892. Its topographical data was first gathered in 1876 and was updated with survey data gathered during July and August 1891, by J. J. Gilbert of the U. S. Coast and Geodetic Survey. Figure 9 comes from the same map. It enlarges the area at the northern terminal of the Port Townsend Southern Railroad extension. In this map, the right-of-way ends at a wharf on Budd Inlet, which corresponds precisely with the location of the pre-existing Brown's Wharf.

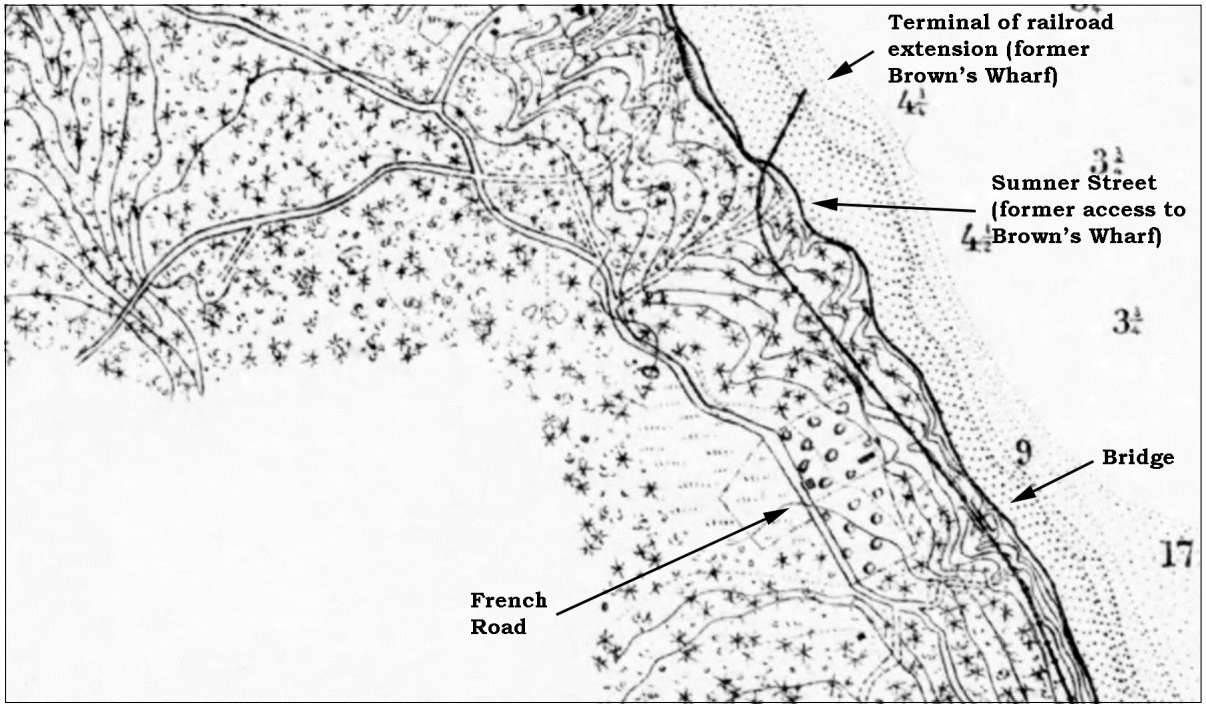
There is no record of passenger trains running on the extension; the right-of-way appears to have been operated as a spur line, without regularly scheduled freight service. Traffic over the extension must have been limited to exportation of coal by the Cherry Hill Coal Company. That organization was incorporated at Olympia December 27, 1889 by Edmund Rice, Stuart Rice, George D. Shannon, and John F. Gowey. The company recorded approximately fifteen deeds for the purchase of coal-bearing properties in Thurston County between September 1890 and July 1893. These included most of the Snyder & Stevens Plat of Tenino and parcels southeast of Tenino. Surface outcroppings of coal were common around Tenino; an earlier name for that community was "Coal Bank." Of equal significance, the coal company acquired a portion of the George W. French Donation Claim (part of Section 3, Township 18 North, Range 2 West). That parcel is precisely where Brown's Wharf was located.[9]

When visiting the Old Port community today, it is difficult to imagine how the northern end of the extension could have descended to the level of the wharf. A sketch of Old Port, by Janice Hilliard, exemplifies this difficulty. In this document, the railroad grade descends on an impossibly steep grade.[10]

Immediately south of Old Port, the railroad grade is visible as a significantly high fill, immediately south of Anchor Lane. From that point, Anchor Lane rises so steeply that it could not have been used (as it appears today) to gain access to Brown's Wharf.

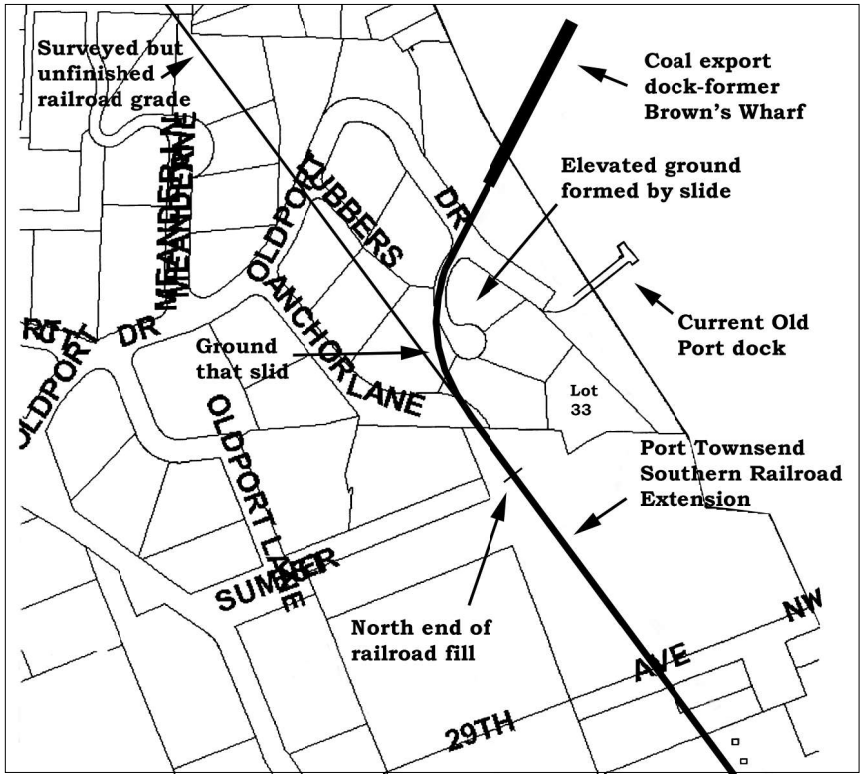
Fred Saeger was living in this area before the Old Port community was developed. He recalls that a slide occurred there sometime before his family moved to the neighborhood. Figure 10 is a map of Old Port which shows where the slide started, and where it came to rest. Clearly, it obliterated much of the grade to the wharf. Whatever was left was probably filled in to create the south end of Anchor Lane when Old Port was developed. Anchor Lane became the necessary access road for Lot 33.

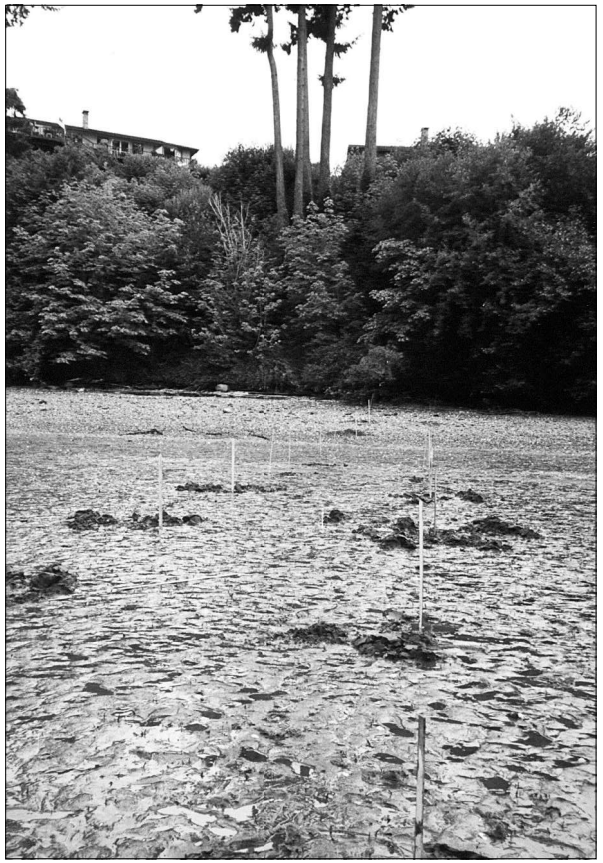
Figures 11 through 15 are early 21st Century photographs of other parts of the extension. The track to Butler Cove was abandoned in 1894.[3] This was probably caused, indirectly, by the financial panic of 1893. The busi-



***Above**: Figure 9: Enlargement of Figure 8 near the former Brown's Wharf.*

***Right**: Figure 10: Map of part of the Old Port community showing the surveyed Port Townsend Southern Railroad right-of-way between Olympia and Union City. Included is the extension, as actually built, terminating at the pre-existing Brown's Wharf.*





***Left**: Figure 11: View north at the junction of West Bay Drive and Schneider Hill Road NW. The extension went straight ahead from here, climbing along the side of the hill seen in the distance. After the extension was removed in 1894, a spur track was installed which followed West Bay Drive to waterfront industries farther north.*

***Right**: Figure 12: View west along remaining traces of the pilings used by Brown's Wharf. The stubs of pilings were visible during a very low tide. Stakes were driven next to the stubs to enhance visibility. Thanks to Fred Saeger for providing this information.*

Figure 13: View west from West Bay Drive, showing the bench upon which the railroad lay as it gained elevation. The photo was made approximately 500 feet north of Figure 11.

Figure 14: View southeast along the extension where it follows 25th Avenue NW. 25th Avenue NW originates at Crestline Drive NW, travels northeast, and turns 90 degrees to pass southeast, paralleling the shore of Budd Inlet.

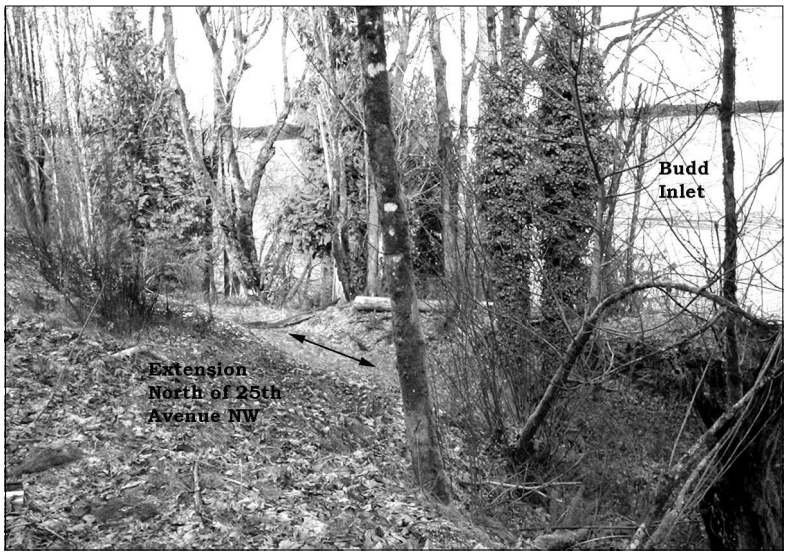


Figure 15: View northeast from a point just west of the place where 25th Avenue NW makes its 90-degree turn. To the immediate north, the railroad crossed a canyon with a bridge visible in Figure 9.

ness of the Cherry Hill Coal Company must have failed that year, for it was in default on a $50,000 mortgage taken on coal-bearing land in south Thurston County.[11] When coal traffic on the extension evaporated, the rails were picked up.

Figure 16 is an enlargement of Figure 6 showing the region immediately west of Olympia. The October 31, 1890 article in *Railroad Gazette*, quoted above, suggests that some clearing and grading was done to the west of Butler Cove. A certain Thurston County deed

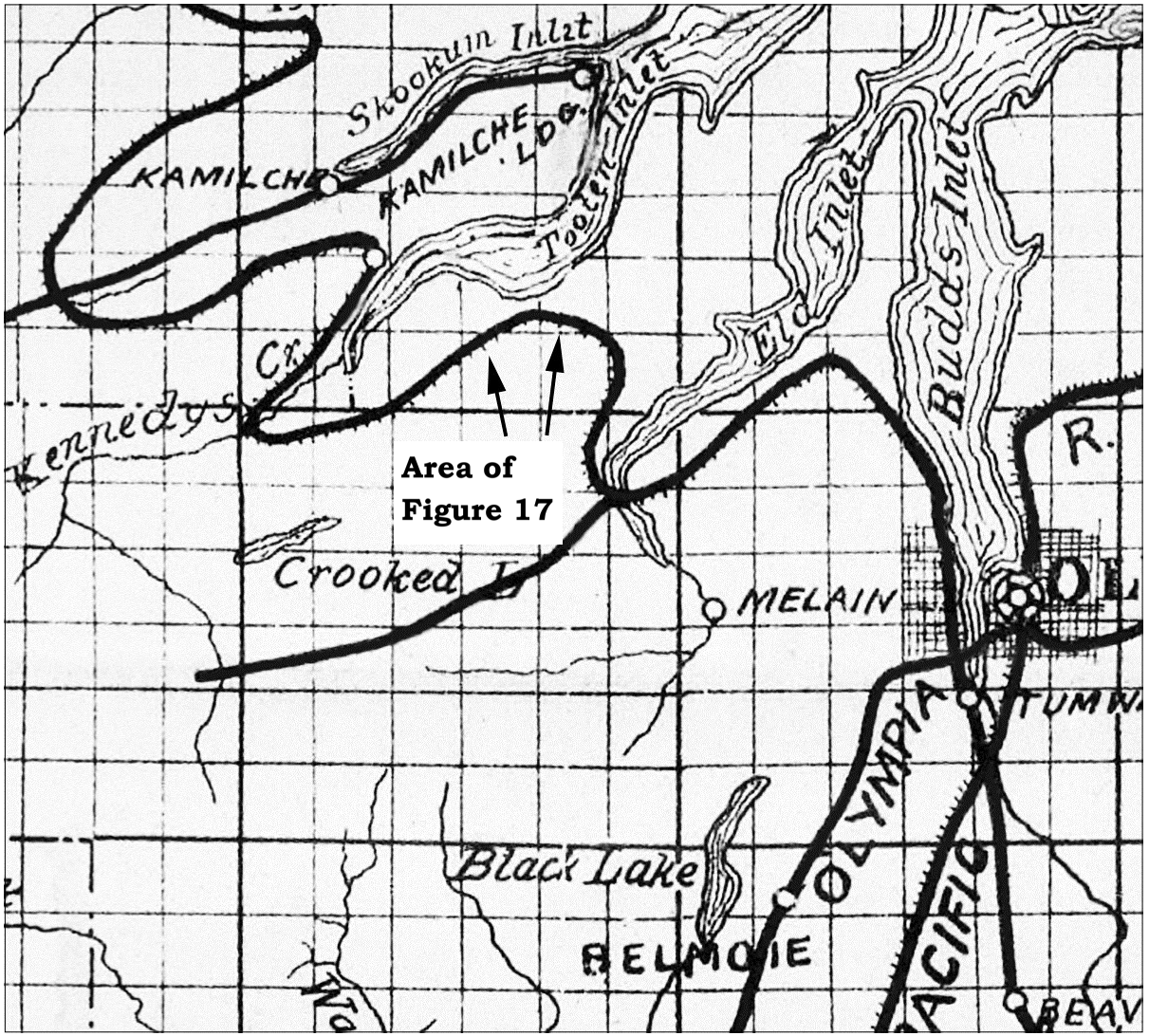


Figure 16: Enlargement of part of Figure 6. Arrows indicate where topographical features consistent with a railroad grade can be seen in Figure 17.

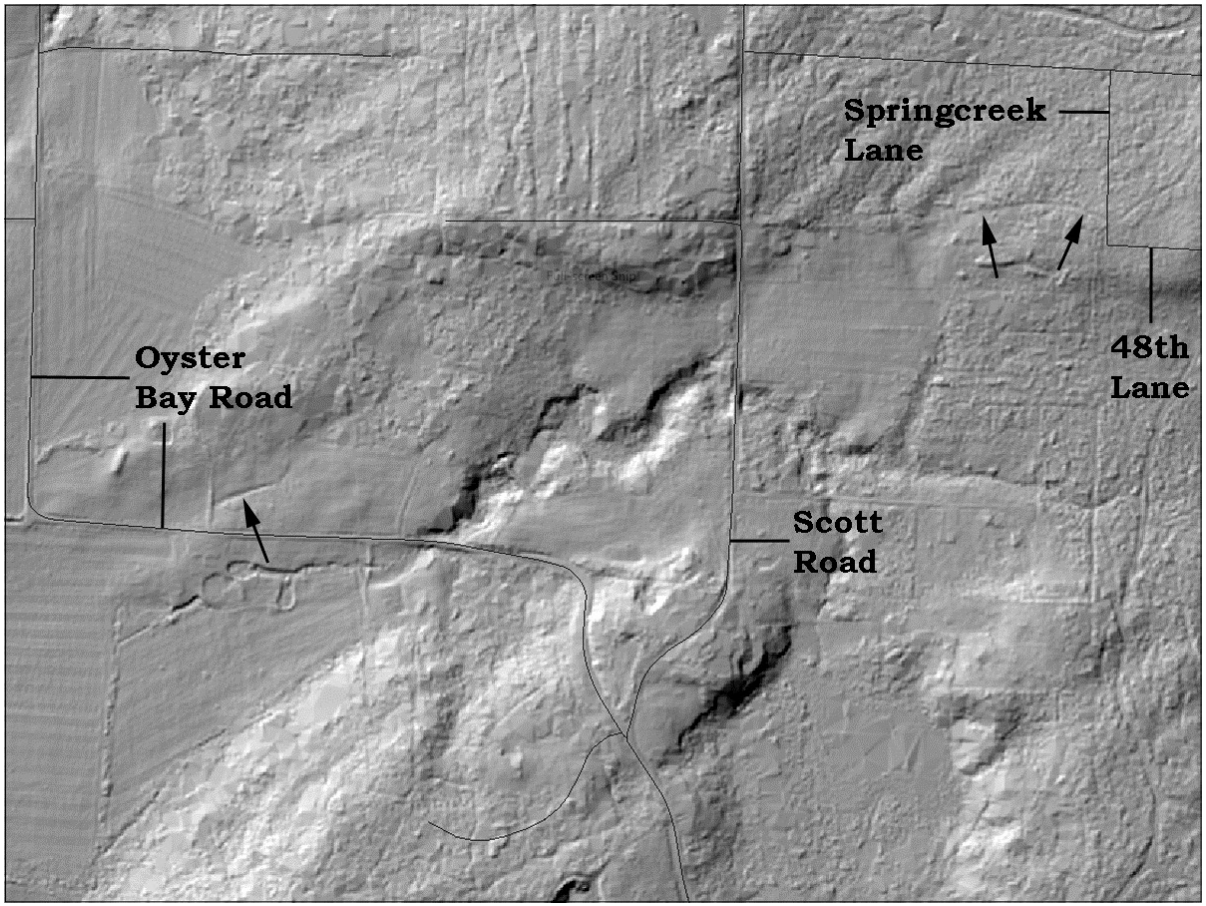


Figure 17: A 2003 Lidar Hillshade aerial photograph showing surface features in part of the Steamboat Island Peninsula. Courtesy of the Thurston County Geodata Center.

probably identifies where part of that right-of-way was located.[12] Therein, the Cherry Hill Coal Company bought a parcel to the west of the modern-day Evergreen State College campus. This is compatible with the surveyed route having run immediately north of the main campus buildings, and the coal company anticipating use of the railroad for exporting its product.

Arrows visible in Figure 16 indicate a region farther west (in the south part of the Steamboat Island Peninsula) where topographic features suggest that grading took place. Figure 17 indicates two places where surface alterations are consistent with human activity; these line up precisely with the grade of the Port Townsend Southern Railroad, as seen on Figure 16.

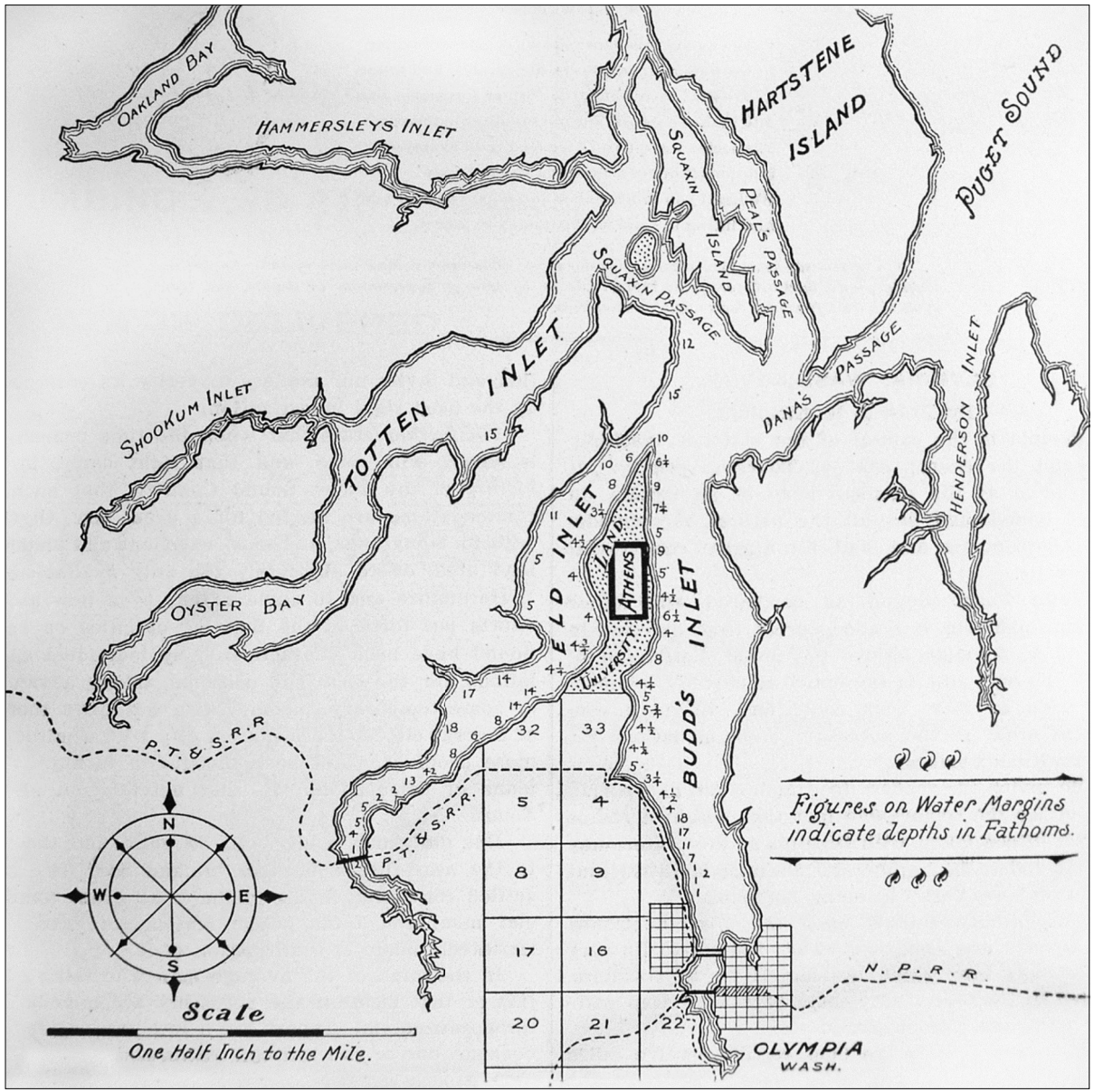


Figure 18: Map from The College Independent*, published by the students of the People's University, Olympia, Washington, Volume I, Number 4, January 1903.*

Figure 18 is a map published in 1903. It shows the proposed location for the permanent campus of the People's University, situated at a community on Cooper Point called Athens. The university never moved there from downtown Olympia, closing its doors in 1906. Nonetheless, the surveyed

route of the Port Townsend Southern Railroad, between Olympia and Mason County, is still represented on this map. In the years after 1894, the railroad company never gave up planning to build this line someday. Indeed, it resurveyed the right-of-way in 1906, but did not resume construction. Figure 18 is probably the most accurate conception of this never-completed railroad.

NOTES

[1] Gauge, in respect to a railroad, is the distance between the two rails which comprise a segment of track. Standard gauge is 56.5 inches; narrow gauge is any distance less than that. The Olympia & Chehalis Valley Railroad used a gauge of 36 inches.

[2] In Mason County Deed Book S, pages 267-269, dated June 19, 1889, the Port Townsend Southern Railroad Company buys 500 lots in Union City from the Hoods Canal Land & Improvement Company. The sale was conditional upon the location, by July 1, 1890, of a standard-gauge railroad from the Bay of Port Townsend, via the west side of Hood Canal, to the Columbia River "or with some railroad in Washington Territory in operation, and having transcontinental connections."

[3] Valuation Docket No. 803, Port Townsend and Puget Sound Railway Company et al. Submitted June 26, 1926. Decided September 17, 1926. Volume 116 I of Interstate Commerce Commission Reports. Docket No. 803 also specifies that "This report also embraces the valuation of the property of the Port Townsend Southern Railroad Company." Washington State Law Library.

[4] Thurston County Deed Book 23, page 223, Washington State Archives, Southwest Regional Branch. Theodore L. Brown, Martha Brown, and Benjamin F. Brown sold to the Port Townsend Southern Railroad a right-of-way over Lots 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 of Block 22, in the Plat of West Olympia.

[5] Lewis County Deed Book P, page 726, dated April 17, 1889, Washington State Archives, Southwest Regional Branch. Therein, the Olympia & Chehalis Valley Railroad Company bought a strip of land 50 feet wide through the south half of the northeast quarter of Section 3, Township 14 North, Range 2 West.

[6] *Railroad Gazette*, April 25, 1890, page 294.

[7] Minnesota Historical Society, Northern Pacific Records, Port Townsend Southern Railroad Company, Box 3, Folder 9. Therein, J. H. Smith & Company was contracted to build the three-mile extension on March 1, 1891. This company was located at the corner of First and Stark Streets, Portland, Oregon.

[8] University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections Division, Allen South, Accession No. 0249-001, Ore-

gon Improvement Company Records, Box 78.

[9] Thurston County Deed Book 22, page 386, dated October 23, 1890, 10 acres, $9,000.00. Washington State Archives, Southwest Regional Branch.

[10] Thurston County Judgment Book 3, page 63, dated November 27, 1893, Washington State Archives, Southwest Regional Branch. A judgment regarding the mortgage issued by the Cherry Hill Coal Company October 1, 1890.

[11] Thurston County Deed Book 20, page 741, dated September 8, 1890, Washington State Archives, Southwest Regional Branch. The Cherry Hill Coal Company bought Lots 2, 3, and 4 and the south half of the southeast quarter of Section 1, Township 18 North, Range 3 West. This parcel is approximately 0.6 mile west of The Evergreen State College campus.

[12] Unpublished documents circulated locally within the Old Port community: 1. *The History of Old Port*, by Mrs. Marion T. Lemon, circa 1971. She lived in the Lemon house at Old Port until 1989. She was born in 1899 and was the wife of Millard Gerry Lemon, who was the son of Millard Lemon (born about 1853 in Idaho). 2. Sketch of Old Port by Janice Hilliard, the daughter of Millard Gerry and Marion T. Lemon. She was born circa 1931 and grew up at the place that became Old Port.

Dr. Hannum is a retired physician and surgeon who spent his early years in Michigan. He arrived in western Washington in 1971 as a member of the U.S. Public Health Service. Railroad history has been a life-long interest, and he has written several books on the subject.